

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Steve Jones
(202)226-3450

ISTOOK TAKES AIM AT OPULENT COURTHOUSES, USELESS FEDERAL AGENCIES

Washington, D.C. - Noting that many federal courthouses are becoming too ornate, Rep. Ernest Istook, (R-OK), plans to offer an amendment on the House floor Wednesday to cut funding for new courthouse construction by \$32 million.

"Americans are looking for simple justice in their federal courthouses, not fancy walls of imported marble," Istook said.

"The cuts will still permit building the courthouses, but as more practical and functional buildings, not monuments to government extravagance."

The Oklahoma Congressman points out that federal courthouses often cost twice as much to build as state courthouses, with extras such as marble walls, kitchenettes, custom spiral staircases, and original art works driving up the costs. Congress is considering 19 construction projects for funding this year.

"In Tucson, Arizona, the federal courthouse is costing \$181 per square foot, while the state of Arizona has built a new state supreme court building for \$93 per square foot.

"That's a pattern repeated all over the country. To make matters worse, the U.S. Administrative Office of the Courts has vastly overestimated space needs. If we build everything they want, we'll have \$1.1 billion worth of unneeded new court space!"

Istook's amendment would cut 25-percent of the cost over \$100 per square foot, for all new courthouse construction projects. For example, the Arizona courthouse now costing \$181 per square foot would be funded at about \$160 per square foot.

Istook has joined a bipartisan group of six Senators and one Representative, in a letter requesting a study on the matter by the General Accounting Office (see attached).

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Rep. Istook will also introduce amendments Wednesday to eliminate two unneeded Commissions, for a savings of \$2.8 million.

He wants to eliminate the Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS), and the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR).

"The President has said he welcomes any suggestions to make government work better and cost less," Istook said, "and on this point I agree. These commissions are unnecessary, so let's get rid of them."

(more)

The ACIR was created to help federal, state and local government agencies communicate with one another. The ACUS studies government regulations, but the House last year declared its mission complete.

Last year, Istook's efforts to eliminate the ACIR and ACUS led to cuts in funding to the two commissions. Those cuts, plus cuts to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, and the elimination of the Citizen's Commission on Public Service and Compensation last year, led to a savings of nearly \$2 million.

"We have too many agencies, commissions and other groups we simply don't need. Some, like the ACUS, have fulfilled their mission. Others are duplicating the work done by other agencies.

Cutting ACUS and ACIR is a good place to start making government better."